REMARKS

Claims 1-7, 10-19, 22, 27-33, 38-41 and 44-45 were rejected in an Office Action dated January 26, 2006. Claims 8, 9, 20, 21, 23-26, 34-37, 42 and 43 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the following remarks.

I. Election/Restriction Requirement Under 35 U.S.C. §121

Applicants appreciate the acknowledgment of the election of Species A (stock material). Applicant reserves the right to pursue the subject matter of cancelled claims 8, 9, 20, 21, 23-26, 34-37 and 42-43 in a divisional application.

II. The Claims are Not Anticipated by the Prior Art

Claims 1-7, 10-12, 30-33 and 38-41 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Korleski (EP 0 731 153). Moreover, claims 1-4, 6-7, 10-16, 18-19, 27-33, 38, 40-41 and 44-45 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Gore (US 3,953,566). Further, claims 1, 4, 13, 16, 30, 38 and 44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Shobert (US 4,976,550). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Korleski (EP 0 731 153) teaches an adhesive composite and a process for preparing same where a fluoropolymer having nodes and fibrils which is at least partially filled with a paste formed from a thermoset or thermoplastic adhesive and a particulate inorganic filler, as described therein.

It was stated in the Office Action that Korleski discloses a porous expanded PTFE having a microstructure defined by nodes interconnected by fibrils wherein the nodes are aligned to form one or more columns in the thickness direction of the material, and reference is made to Figure 1. Applicants submit that the node and fibril structure described and depicted in Korleski is not "...aligned to form one or more columns in the thickness direction," and thus, does not disclose or suggest applicant's claimed unique microstructure. Applicants refer the patent Office to the microstructures shown in the present Figures, particularly Figures 4, 7 and 9, which are clearly different from that shown in Korleski and which form one or more columns in the thickness direction. Accordingly, applicants submit that Korleski does not anticipate, disclose or suggest the novel claimed structures of the present invention, and thus the present claims 1-7, 10-12, 30-33 and 38-41, and this rejection should be withdrawn.

With respect to the rejection of the present invention over Gore, applicants submit that Gore teaches a tetrafluoroethylene polymer which has a microstructure characterized by nodes interconnected by fibrils.

Applicants submit that the node and fibril structure described and depicted in Gore is not "...aligned to form one or more columns in the thickness direction," and thus, does not disclose or suggest applicant's claimed unique microstructure. Applicants refer the patent Office to the microstructures shown in the present Figures, particularly Figures 4, 7 and 9, which form one or more columns in the thickness direction, and which are clearly different from that shown in Figure 1 of Gore,. Accordingly, applicants submit that Gore does not anticipate, disclose or suggest the novel claimed structures of the present invention, and thus the present claims1-4, 6-7, 10-16, 18-19, 27-33, 38, 40-41 and 44-4, and this rejection should be withdrawn.

With respect to the rejection of the present invention over Shobert, applicants submit that the Patent Office accurately states that Shobert teaches fiber strands of expanded PTFE are woven about a cylindrical mandrel to form a fabric about the cylindrical mold surface. However, applicants reiterate the position stated above with respect to Korleski and Gore that structure described and depicted in Shobert is not "...aligned to form one or more columns in the thickness direction," and thus, does not disclose or suggest applicant's claimed unique microstructure. Applicants refer the Patent Office to the microstructures shown in the present Figures, particularly Figures 4, 7 and 9, which form one or more columns in the thickness direction, and which are clearly different from that described or shown in Shobert. Accordingly, applicants submit that Shobert does not anticipate, disclose or suggest the novel claimed structures of the present invention, and thus the present claims 1, 4, 13, 16, 30, 38 and 44 , and this rejection should be withdrawn.

III. The Claims Are Neither Disclosed Nor Suggested by the Cited References

Claims 5, 17 and 39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Gore and/or Shobert in view of Yanase et al. (US 6,548,188) and/or Matt (US 4,075,512). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Applicants repeat the statements made earlier with respect to the shortcomings of Gore and Shobert to anticipate or to render obvious the claimed invention. Yanase et al. and Matt were relied on for the teachings of PTFE fiber bearings imbibed with resin, e.g., polyimide.

Applicants submit that neither Yanase et al. nor Matt, whether taken alone or in combination, overcome the deficiencies of Korleski et al. and Gore, noted above, to render obvious the claimed invention. Specifically, as stated earlier, none of the cited references teaches applicant's claimed porous expanded PTFE material having a microstructure defined by nodes interconnected by fibrils wherein the nodes are aligned to form one or more columns in the thickness direction of the material, and at least one polymer resin selected from the group consisting of thermoset resins and thermoplastic resins distributed within the pores of the expanded PTFE.

Accordingly, applicants submit that this rejection of claims 5, 17 and 39 should be withdrawn.

V. Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the present invention as defined by claims 1-7, 10-19, 22, 27-33, 38-41 and 44-45, is neither taught nor suggested by any of the references of record. Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that these claims are in form for allowance. If further questions remain, applicant requests that the Examiner telephone applicant's undersigned representative to schedule an interview before issuing a further Office Action.

Should the Patent Office have any questions regarding the present response, the Examiner is requested to contact applicant's undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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